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ABSTRACT

Faculty members, administrators, and board members must work together to find acceptable resolutions of the problems created by under and overproduction if they hope to retain the autonomy of their colleges. Underproduction is illustrated in insufficient attention to community employment needs, inadequate quality control in career programs, poor preparation for transfer students, lack of response to community needs, and misuse of college facilities. Overproduction is illustrated in an unbalanced staff, continuance of a curriculum where no evident need for a program exists, packing enrollment regardless of the college mission or community needs, and failing to produce career competent graduates or students educated as responsible individuals sensitive to community and national needs. Some particular items to be aware of in reviewing and assessing community college productivity include instructional, administrative, facility and service costs; quality control for students and personnel; board/administrator/faculty cooperation; interinstitutional cooperation; continuing curricular, administrative and service program evaluation; part-time faculty trends; and evaluation of the impact of state offices, institutional research planning and development offices, staff development, and sabbaticals on productivity and quality control. (TR)

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PRODUCTIVITY AND THE FUTURE OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

National Conference - League for Innovation
Charlotte, North Carolina
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Joseph P. Cosand

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

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1. Congratulations to the League and to the host institutions for sponsoring such national conferences on topics of importance and urgency to community colleges.

   It was my privilege to be a co-founder of the League and it is most rewarding to note the contributions the League and its member institutions are making to community college education throughout the United States.

   It is also my pleasure to again be with Dick Hagemeyer and members of his fine staff. Surely Central Piedmont must be considered to be one of the outstanding community colleges in the country.

   It is also good to see both new and old friends. I will always be a community college person at heart, and I continue to give it my strongest support.

2. The word "productivity" has been troubling me for some time, and especially so since I accepted the invitation to participate in this conference. As we well know, productivity can mean many things--and definitions will vary according to the individuals or groups using the word. It is a positive word in the eyes of many, and a negative and threatening word to many other persons and groups. Let's be sure we as educational leaders know what we mean, and just as important, let's be sensitive to those others who see the word as a whip or something worse.

3. It is essential, however, that all of us concerned with the community college and its future understand the positive connotation of productivity and work together towards acceptable resolutions of the problem created by under production and by over production. Included in the totality are the consumers, the taxpayers, the state and local governments, business, industry, labor, and those who make up the college itself--the Board, the faculty, the administrative staff, and the support staff. This is a tremendous complexity.

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4. Underproduction can be defined and illustrated in various ways, all of which are detrimental to the college and to society as a whole. The following are examples:

   A. Insufficient attention to the employment needs of the community.

   B. Inadequate quality control in the career programs with resultant underprepared students for employability.

   C. Poor and misleading preparation of those transfer students going on for baccalaureate degrees.

   D. Lack of attention to the needs of the community in terms of public services, older and retired citizens and the many special needs of specific groups of people -- by interest group -- by race and by sex.

   E. Wasteful management as interpreted by procedures, by questionable positions, and by poorly functioning individuals.

   F. Poorly prepared, outdated faculty who can add little if anything to the growth of a student.

   G. Unused seats, rooms and buildings where too high a percentage are empty too much of the day, of the week, and of the year.

   H. Empty libraries, laboratories, shops, performance rooms which provide an image of waste and unused space.

   I. Sparsely occupied parking lots except from 9 AM - 3 PM five days a week, and perhaps from 7-9 PM.

These are illustrative of what is observed, discussed, and criticized by our various publics, including our friends as well as our competitors and critics. Recent articles in the Detroit Free Press raised some of these points and asked questions--with special emphasis on Quality--raising the question as to whether there was a "quality product" coming from the community colleges.

5. Overproduction is increasingly being viewed as a major problem in all of higher education and is becoming a major concern of both consumers and taxpayers, as well as by state and local governments in terms of their willingness to provide tax support. Again examples are illustrative.

   A. An unbalanced staff--academic, occupational, remedial--in terms of the needs of the students and of the community.

   B. Continued scheduling of a curriculum when there is no longer any evident need of the program. This becomes a program for the faculty or for the administrator rather than for the student and society.

C. Enrollment of "bodies" to keep up the enrollment or to keep up the growth--regardless of the college mission or the community needs. This is one of the worst forms of rationalization and perhaps may be called chicanery.

D. Bob Ewiglehen, President of Ferris State College in Michigan and formerly President of the College of San Mateo, recently predicted "that a new wave of educational consumerism could arise from within the growing population of 'underemployed' college graduates." He called for more colleges to produce graduates who have career competence and to educate students as responsible individuals, sensitive to the needs of their communities and nation.

Isn't that what community colleges are supposed to be doing and must all be committed to as we look to the future? Is career competence and responsible citizenship a definition of productivity? Are these two components plus those of personal and cultural growth the benchmarks we should look to?

6. Researching and sharing our findings with respect to both underproductivity and overproductivity is essential as we look to the future. In many ways it is far too late, for intrusions into our autonomy to make our decisions have grown rapidly and I believe the pace of external decision-making is increasing. Our state governments (both legislative and executive branches), the Federal government, national organizations of boards, unions, presidents, and professional units, as well as state organizations of similar groups are all involved and increasingly want into the decision-making process. These intrusions can't help but affect our productivity and our future.

   The League is to be congratulated for its concerns as enumerated on page 3 of its publication, "Toward Increased Efficiency in Community Junior College Courses."

7. For more than two days you have discussed productivity in terms of the Federal government, institutional management, faculty services, collective bargaining, alternative learning methods, new delivery systems, flexible calendars, and cognitive style. Each one of these is sufficiently important to be the sole discussion topic for a major conference. However, they do all affect productivity and it is our responsibility as educational leaders to see them in their totality as they separately and together mold our future.

8. We can define the problems we face in the future in rather simple terms--but my, how complex the simple terms become!

--Access for whom - for what purpose?

--At what cost to whom - within our resources? That's what it's all about.

--What are our priorities in terms of the realities within which we function as community colleges?

Each one of us, each college staff and board member, must answer these questions, and, in looking to the future must answer to the consumer. Our refusal to face up to the questions and to reach agreements together only invites external intrusions into our decision-making process, and raises criticisms of our leadership ability.

Can we as faculty, administrators, and boards maintain a triangle of strength where understanding, respect, collegiality, and mutually supportive action will create a climate of decision-making in which productivity is viewed positively and as a commitment for the future? I am convinced we must and that we can.

Perhaps the individuals in our colleges and the separate bodies--faculty, administrators, board members, support staff--don't see the total picture of productivity. Perhaps to some extent, maybe a major extent, we all tend to wear blinders. Is it possible in our colleges to clarify the many problems of productivity so that we can see through the protective walls we tend to build around our person and around our special interest groups. I believe we can, for I see it occurring among our doctoral students. They are overwhelmed at first as they are moved from narrow parochial interests into the complexities of the community college--or of higher education as a whole. However, their attitudes change and they become more aware of the many facets to the decision-making process in an institution.

Can the same thing happen in a college where there is an honest climate of discussion which leads to action benefitting the college as a whole, for the students it serves in accordance with its mission and within its resources and priorities? I think it can.

Although you have heard presentations on productivity as related to many of the following items, I am going to list some which must be understood as a whole by all of us, if we wish to continue to make those decisions

which will affect the future of our institutions. Faculty members, administrators, and board members cannot escape from this responsibility if they hope to retain the autonomy of their colleges.

1. Instructional costs: The multiplying effect of salary increases, lower teacher loads, lower student-teacher ratios, and fringe benefit increases. How much does this take of the total pie?

2. Administrative costs: The multiplying effect of salary increases, higher titles, new positions, and fringe benefit increases Do these costs plus instructional costs take most of the dollars?

3. Facility costs: Seat utilization, room utilization -- 8 AM - 5 PM; 6 PM - 10 PM; weekends - in classrooms, laboratories, etc. Are our colleges primarily 9-3 and 7-10?

4. Service costs in terms of usage and FTE. Libraries, learning laboratories, counselors, secretarial services, custodial services, police and watchmen, utilities, intercollegaite activities. Are we evaluating their roles in terms of costs?

5. Quality control - students

   A. Transfer
   B. Career
   C. Remedial
   D. Withdrawal
   E. Performance (cultural, athletics)

6. Quality control - personnel

   A. Upgrading and retraining
   B. Avocational
   C. Cultural
   D. Personal growth

7. Board-Administrator-Faculty cooperation and utilization of personal and group energies for constructive purposes instead of the corrosive effects of antagonistic, negative adversarial relationships. Creative argument and tension is needed and builds--the opposite destroys.

8. Interinstitutional cooperation and sharing of resources to curtail costly duplication and to increase program quality.

9. Careful and continuing evaluation of curricula and courses to provide for defensible reallocation of resources through:

   A. Increases
   B. Decreases
   C. Elimination of courses and programs

10. Similar evaluation of administrative and service programs and respective positions.

11. Evaluation of trend to part-time faculty with research data on the effects upon productivity -- on costs and on quality -- and on instructional and college climate.

12. Evaluation of state offices upon productivity and quality control.

13. Evaluation of Institutional Research, Planning & Development Offices upon productivity, costs, and quality of program.

14. Evaluation of Staff Development on productivity and quality of program.

15. Evaluation of sabbaticals on productivity -- sabbaticals for both faculty and administrators, and yes, for support staff as well.

These questions and problems are not easy and they are going to become more difficult during the next decade. We have already seen a revolution in our student population in terms of interest, choice and age. Our faculties have changed from mainly full-time to heavily part-time. Our board members are increasingly concerned with collective bargaining, personal liability, and presidential procedure. Our Vice Presidents, Deans, and sub-administrators are being squeezed financially and threatened professionally. Our presidents are harrassed.

It's time, past time that we took off our blinders, listened to one another, discussed our future, and together charted the course we will follow into the 1980's to be sure we know and understand just what our mission is, and how we will accomplish it within the resources we have available.

For sure others will be glad to do it for us, through arguments of our inefficiency as educators. I am not ready to see our colleges changed from educational institutions into businesses or industries. However, rhetoric and emotion are not enough. Action on our part--together--is the only acceptable answer.

Joseph P. Cosand
The University of Michigan
November, 1977